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CAN A SPEAKER OF SYLLABLE-TIMED L1 (SPANISH) RECOGNIZE THE STRESS-
TIMED PATTERN OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE?

by

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A Capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Masters of Arts in English as a Second Language.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Kim: Hi, who is your child here?

Masooma: That girl in the rainbow shirt. And, who is yours?

Kim: That's my son in the yellow shirt.

Masooma: What do you do?

Kim: I'm an engineer. How about you?

Masooma: I'm an ESL teacher.

Kim: That's great! I learned English in China. I used to feel that my English was very good until I moved to the US 10 years ago. But, now I realize that we should have been taught pronunciation too. I'm good at grammar, I can read and write very well but I was never taught pronunciation back home and because of this people don't understand me well. I feel that I can never reach the highest position at work.

In a recent conversation with a parent at my daughter's tennis lesson I realized that formal pronunciation instruction plays a vital role in the process of second language acquisition. I came across a fellow parent at my 9-year-old daughter's tennis lesson one evening. While watching our kids play we introduced ourselves to each other. After learning about my line of work she shared her own experience of acquiring English as a second language (ESL). She was from China, having moved to the US about ten years ago. A very highly educated individual, she attended a professional advanced degree college in her home country, and was confident about her English language skills until she moved to the United States. She was taught English back home since her early school years but pronunciation was not included as part of her English curriculum. Hearing that pronunciation was never addressed in her language instruction caught my attention. Her

reflections that, “because of my accented speech I always feel like a second-grade citizen” and that “because of my language I cannot reach the highest position in my profession”. That was the moment when I thought about the importance of suprasegmentals in ESL instruction.

Researchers of ESL/EFL (English as a Foreign Language) instruction and pedagogy have explored the importance of segmentals, which are individual sounds of a language, and suprasegmentals, which are the prosodic features of language such as rhythm, pitch, stress, intonation and prominence, and the need to include them as part of ESL instruction/curriculum. (Benrabah, 1997; Florez, 1998; Hahn, 2004; Kang, et al., 2010; Levis, 2005; Purrezaey & Khodareza, 2014; Trofimovich & Baker, 2006). Even though pronunciation has moved toward more “holistic, communicative methods and approaches” (Florez, 1998), sporadic and unplanned “on-the-spot” teaching of pronunciation features still persists. Planned and purposefully pronunciation instruction is crucial for adult learners because errors can result in unintelligible speech and be frustrating to the listener and speaker alike (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin 2010).

ESL educators including my fellow teachers claim that formal instruction of pronunciation elements is not given sufficient attention in most language syllabi/curricula. Further more, there is limited integration of research in the production of teaching materials (Silveira, 2002). The impact on learners is that, “limited pronunciation skills can undermine learners’ self-confidence, restrict social interactions, and negatively influence estimations of a speaker’s credibility” (Florez, 1998).

Research Question and Objective

Taking the above idea of the need of including suprasegmentals in ESL instruction this study is going to explore the question: *Can a speaker of a syllable-timed L1 recognize the stress-timed basic sentence stress pattern (in declarative sentences) in English?*

This will be an action-based case study focusing on the ability of a learner, here named Anna, to recognize her incorrect sentence stress in English and recognize what the target stress should be. Within the process I will observe and take notes on the development of this subject's linguistic performance through interventional sessions. Working with one Spanish speaking adult participant I will follow a pre and post-test procedure collecting data over the course of four consecutive once-a-week sessions. She will be interviewed on the first and the last session while the sessions in between will be interventional. The results of this case study will help to determine if the feature in hand, English sentence stress, can be recognized and worked on.

From the time of my interaction with the parent at my daughter's tennis lesson I decided to render individual attention to accent and pronunciation in my private teaching experiences. The participant of this study is a Spanish-speaking 37-year-old adult female who moved to the United States 18 years ago from Mexico. She wants to learn English to help her children at school and to be understood at work places. Her proficiency is at a high-beginning level. She can read beginning-level English text but struggles in writing. She went to an elementary school in Mexico where English was not taught. Recently, she attended a language school at a community education center in the US for a short period of time and now wants to improve her language in a private setting. I teach her

independently in a casual setting once a week for an hour. In the time I have worked with Anna I have seen a significant improvement in her structural language but there continued to be a problem with her speaking skills that I was not able to diagnose until I took the Phonetics and Phonology class as part of my MA ESL degree program. All I thought before was that she was speaking English with a Spanish accent. In this class we learned about suprasegmentals and how they can affect fluency and intelligibility. In particular, we read about sentence stress patterns and stress-timing in English and other languages and how these features can influence comprehensibility and intelligibility.

In English, which is a stress-timed language, typically content words (words that carry information) are given more stress and function words (words that imply grammatical relationships) are given less stress. The content and function words are categorized as shown below in Table 1.

Table 1

English Language Word Categories

Content Words	Function Words
Nouns	Articles
Main verbs	Auxiliary verbs
Adjectives	Personal pronouns
Interrogative words	Relative pronouns
Demonstrative pronouns	Possessive adjectives
Possessive pronouns	Demonstrative adjectives
Adverbial particles	
Negative particles	
Negative contractions	

(Celce-Murcia, et al, 2010, p.212)

The content words can be categorized as nouns, main verbs, adjectives, interrogative words that begin with information questions such as who, what, when and where, demonstrative pronouns that point or emphasize such as this, that, these, those, possessive pronouns such as his, hers, yours, adverbs such as only, too, always, adverbial particles following phrasal verbs such as come with, go off, take off and also the negative particle, not, and negative contractions isn't and can't. Function words, on the contrary, are the connecting structural words such as articles and auxiliary verbs, are not stressed. Also words that are used for previously mentioned information such as personal pronouns, relative pronouns possessive and demonstrative adjectives are mostly unstressed (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 2010 p.210). In my teaching I observed that my student was using incorrect sentence stress patterns by putting nearly equal stress on all words and each syllable (see Table 1).

Table 2

<i>Stress Pattern</i>	
English Language Stress-timed Pattern	Anna's Sentence Stress
My NAME is Anna	MY NAME IS ANNA
I'm from MEXico	I AM FROM MEXICO
My FAVorite HOLiday is CHRISTmas	MY FAVORITE HOLIDAY IS CHRISTMAS

In the above example the participant put equal stress on each syllable where as according to the stress-timed English sentence stress pattern only the content words are more stressed and function words are given less stress.

In this study I'll attempt to help Anna recognize and practice the difference between syllable-timed vs stress-timed stress pattern, along with the components of a stressed syllable vs reduced stressed syllable pattern through listening and speaking activities. (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Goodwin, 2010).

Anna clearly states about her experience in language class that, "I feel that I know the language only within the classroom but not in the outside places. I feel disconnected because people talk too fast" (Anna). This comment made me realize that Anna's ears are used to decoding each and every word spoken in a sentence because of her syllable-timed Spanish background. Since suprasegmentals are not given much attention in ESL classrooms, learners often don't have a chance to notice the differences between syllable and stress-timed sentence stress patterns and don't have opportunities to practice these elements. In my research I am going to work on familiarizing Anna with the stress-timed nature of English language through four consecutive interventional sessions. I aim to help Anna recognize the patterns of syllable-times languages and practice the stress-timed English sentence stress pattern through declarative sentences. I hope to learn through this study if Anna, a native speaker of Spanish, can demonstrate understanding of the simple sentence stress pattern of English, a stress-timed language.

Researchers claim that, "listeners can tolerate a great deal of inaccuracy in pronouncing consonants and vowels, so long as pitch and pausing are used appropriately" (Kang, et al., 2010. p 555). Hence, recognition of suprasegmental features plays an important role in acquiring second language comprehensibility and intelligibility (Kang, et al., 2010; Benrabah, 1997). It is necessary for the learners to recognize these features as a first step that will lead to their conscious effort to work on them (Couper, 2003).

One way to draw learner's attention to their pronunciation challenges is to focus on one feature at a time (Hahn, 2004). Thus, the objective of this study is to provide a focused and comprehensive investigation of one suprasegmental feature: stress-timing in English language.

It has also been claimed that learning is influenced by various factors, such as, aptitude, age, interest and motivation (Florez, 1998). Keeping that in mind the results of my study cannot be generalized to other learners of different backgrounds. Yet, it will be useful for future educators and researchers in drawing conclusions and designing curricula to meet the needs of adult ESL/EFL learners.

Summary and Chapter Preview

In this chapter I have explained my own experience as an ESL educator and how I got interested in teaching pronunciation, the importance of teaching suprasegmentals with the main focus on one feature of stress-timing in English language, and articulated the significance and need for teaching stress-timing to a learner of a syllable-timed background.

The introduction above has provided characteristics of syllable-timed and stress-timed languages. It explores how the transfer of these features can affect intelligibility and can be recognized. The second chapter will serve to review the previous research on the pedagogical importance of suprasegmentals in ESL instruction. The third chapter will be of methods for the case study and the specific details of the research design tools, the participant and the setting, the procedure. The fourth chapter will cover the results of the study and the reflection of the participant. The fifth chapter will be my reflections on the study along with the limitations and further queries that could be of interest.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many pronunciation researchers have acknowledged the need for giving more importance to suprasegmentals while designing pronunciation curriculum. (Levis, J M 2005, Munro and Derwing, 2005, Acton, W 1984, Benrabah, M 1997, Hahn, D L, 2004, Trofimovich, P and Baker, W, 2006). More empirical research based on individual suprasegmental elements, such as, word stress, sentence stress, intonation, pitch, prominence, is required to expect fruitful pedagogical outcome. With this, the research question of this study is: *Can a speaker of a syllable-timed L1 (Spanish) recognize the stress-timed basic sentence stress pattern in English?*

As mentioned above this study will focus on one suprasegmental element of basic sentence stress in English language. It will focus on helping the syllable-timed Spanish L1 learner recognize the stress-timed English sentence stress pattern. Inculcating the importance of syllable-timed vs stress-timed features in pronunciation instruction, this chapter will address the following topics: characteristics of stress-timed and syllable-timed languages, pronunciation and the ESL classroom, factors influencing pronunciation acquisition, the importance of suprasegmentals in pronunciation instruction, intelligibility and comprehensibility, and explicit pronunciation instruction of suprasegmentals.

Characteristics of Stress-timed and Syllable-timed Languages

In stress-timed languages rhythm is created with the combination of unstressed, less stressed and high stressed syllables (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 2010). Content words that carry the information are stressed and function words that signify grammatical meaning are reduced or not stressed, for example, the **BOOK** is on the **T**able. In English the high stressed syllables are longer, louder and higher in pitch and carry the most weight, on the other hand, the less stressed syllables are embedded within the stream of syllabic occurrence, for instance vowels are reduced, function words are said quickly (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 2010). In contrast, speakers of a syllable-timed languages such as Spanish, French, Italian, Japanese, Finnish and Brazilian Portuguese tend to put equal or near equal stress on each syllable.

Basic English Sentence Stress

My DAUGHTer is SICK

Spanish L1 Sentence Stress

MY DAUGHTER IS SICK

In the following speech sample the participant of this study shows how she delivers every sentence in a similar rhythmic pattern. She pronounces each syllable in pretty much the same way while she elongates the first syllable of the last word in every sentence. She is not reducing the function words although she is stressing the content words.

MY NAME IS ANNA

I AM FROM **MEXICO**

I LOVE MY **COUNTRY**

Anna needs to be aware of the phrasal pattern in English in which stress is put on content words that carry the most information like nouns, verbs and adjectives, and less stress is put on connecting or function words that signify grammatical relationships. A stressed-

timed language flows from stressed to stressed element, while reducing the connecting unstressed syllables. The table provided by Celce-Murcia, et al (2010) for content and function words provide visual guidelines for stressed content words and reduced function words.

Table 3

Visual guidelines for stressed content words and reduced function words

Content/Information Words	Function Words
Nouns	Articles
Main verbs	Auxiliary verbs
Adjectives	Personal pronouns
Possessive pronouns	Possessive adjectives
Demonstrative pronouns	Demonstrative adjectives
Interrogatives	Prepositions

(Celce-Murcia, et al, 2010, p.212)

With the above table in mind, following are some examples of declarative sentences that demonstrate the stressed-timed nature in English language.

- The SCHOOL STARTS at SEVen in the MORNing.
- It's a BEAUtiful DAY toDAY.
- The BOOK is on the TAbble.
- My FAVorite FRUIT is PINEapple, it's GOOD for your KIDneys.

Importance of Suprasegmentals in Pronunciation

As a result of pronunciation's marginalized status many ESL teachers have no formal preparation or training to teach pronunciation. Munro's (2005) research reported that 67% of ESL teachers surveyed in Canada had no training at all in pronunciation

instruction and this is not limited to only North America but other English speaking countries as well (Munro, p 389 2005). As a result, adult learners after graduating from local community education language schools are able to produce segments of a quality that are close to the target in English. But, as they are not aware of their suprasegmental errors “learners tend to produce distorted stress patterns with unusual lengthening of unstressed syllables”, which “gives unEnglish rhythmic patterns” that leads to unintelligible speech (Banrabah, 1997, p. 9).

Over the last two decades (1990’s and 2000’s), “pronunciation teachers have emphasized suprasegmentals rather than segmentals in promoting intelligibility, despite a paucity of research evidence for this belief” (Levis, 2005, p. 369). Levis shares that accessibility to online resources of “software that makes suprasegmentals discourse functions” will help in promoting work with suprasegmentals (2005, p. 369). However, it is still not claimed/proved that all suprasegmentals are equally adaptable (Levis, 2005). For example it has been observed that some elements of intonation seem to be learnable, but other elements, such as pitch appear to be not. Levis talks about the two opposing principles that influence “pronunciation research and pedagogy”. One is *nativeness principle*, a framework that was accepted before 1960’s, according to which it is possible to acquire native-like pronunciation. But, its influence diminished over time with the concept that acquisition of native-like pronunciation is “biologically conditioned to occur before adulthood”(Levis 2005, p.370). Despite this, the ongoing extensive research on pronunciation learning after critical period shows that very few learners based on factors like motivation and intellect achieve native-like pronunciation (Levis 2005). Age is one major factor in acquiring a foreign language. The second principle Levis mentions is the

intelligibility principle. According to this principle communication can be very successful even when “foreign accents are noticeable or even strong” (Levis, 2005, p. 370). On the contrary, Levis’s research also claims that in intelligibility principle “certain types of pronunciation errors may have a disproportionate role in impairing comprehensibility”(Levis 2005, p. 370). There are different features that affect understanding and instruction should focus on those particular features individually (Levis, 2005).

Benrabah also shares about the importance of teaching suprasegmentals that certain pronunciation features are more important than others. A non-native speaker can produce intelligible speech without much effort if he/she is aware of the factors that have a drastic effect on comprehension. Doing so, Benrabah (1997) examines the effect of incorrect placement of word-stress on learner intelligibility in Indian, Nigerian and Algerian learners of English respectively and provides interpretations given by British listeners. Benrabah presents the findings of three different researchers (Bansal, 1969, Tiffen, 1974, Benrabah, 1987). The researchers recorded their subjects who were asked to speak casually about a topic. The British people listened and reported what they heard the person on the recording saying. The researchers of the study discovered multiple causes that led to miscomprehension and incorrect placement of word-stress proved to be one of them. Benrabah shares that learners of other stress-timed language such as Arabic also struggle with acquiring the right stress pattern of English language. Misplacement of stress in English language shows lack of language command and can hinder language comprehension. If learners are not made aware of their suprasegmental errors then no

matter how well they acquire the segmental features they may still have intelligibility issues.

Trofimovich & Baker (2006) examined the process of acquiring five suprasegmentals (stress timing, peak alignment, speech rate, pause frequency and pause duration) within a small, medium and long time (3 months, 3 years and 10 years in United States) of L2 exposure. The subjects of the study were 30 adult Korean learners of English and 10 adult native English speakers who analyzed six English declarative sentences produced by the Korean learners. The listener's analysis and judgments determined how well the suprasegmentals were produced and to what degree they effected the foreign accent. The results of the study showed that amount of instruction, experience and practice influenced the production of one suprasegmental of stress-timing, where as adult learner's age at the time of first extensive exposure to the L2 influenced the production of others such as speech rate, pause frequency, pause duration (Trofimovich & Baker, 2006). Along the same lines this study includes only one participant with Spanish as L1 and will focus on one feature of stress-timing over the time of four consecutive weeks. The participant will be asked to read ten sample declarative sentences in the first and the last session that will be recorded and measured through Audacity.

Comprehensibility and Intelligibility

The need to include pronunciation in ESL curriculum was realized and accepted in the 1980s when the researchers advocated that only grammatical competence leads a nonnative learner nowhere until and unless he/she acquires close to native-like

pronunciation (Benrabah 1997). Learners seek to acquire intelligible speech patterns aiming to be easily understood by the native listeners (Benrabah 1997).

The two factors of intelligibility and comprehensibility are claimed to play a significant role in language acquisition. Intelligibility is defined as the amount of a speaker's message understood by a listener and being able to identify individual words (Derwing & Munro 1999). And it is measured by the listener's ability to transcribe the speaker's utterance (Parlak 2010). Comprehensibility on the other hand extends to the listener's ability to understand the meaning of an utterance in its context and overall meaning (Derwing and Munro 1999). Its measurement relies on ratings of expert native speaker listeners (Parlak 2010).

The main goal of most language learners (including the subject of this study) is to be intelligible and comprehensible in their second language on both professional and social grounds. A learner's first language can interfere with this goal in terms of acquiring native like accent. It has also been claimed that even heavily accented speech can be intelligible but it requires more time to process for a native listener (Munro & Derwing, 1999). Due to which native listeners "tend to downgrade nonnative speakers" only because of their foreign accent (Munro & Derwing 1999). In the process of meeting the needs of learners who want to acquire a native like accent, ESL educators feel obligated to include accent reduction activities while designing the over all curriculum (Munro & Derwing 1999).

Benrabah talks in favor of "intelligible pronunciation" in which the main goal is to develop the learner's pronunciation sufficiently to allow effective communication, pronunciation that can be understood with little or no conscious effort by the listener. He

also talks about certain pronunciation features that are more important than others such as stress and intonation, control of which effects comprehension (Benrabah 1997).

Benrabah focuses on one feature that of word-stress, and shares that misplaced stress patterns affects intelligibility and can also “hinder language comprehension (1997, p. 3). Correct placement of stress in a word or a statement plays an important role in producing intelligible speech. A native listener is used to only catching the prominent parts of speech and as a result if stress is misplaced the speech takes longer to process (Benrabah 1997).

Pronunciation Instruction and the ESL Classroom

Research has shown that formal instruction of suprasegmentals in an ESL classroom should be given sufficient attention to expect full command in L2 production. Derwing & Munro (2005) along these lines share that a teacher’s goal should be to analyze students speech and pinpoint the weak areas that need improvement.

Hahn’s (2004) study deals with making L2 learners aware of how putting more, or strong stress on new information, and less stress on old information facilitates smooth and intelligible discourse. Acton (1984) worked with English language learners with fossilized accents and proved productive results depending on time and exposure to the target feature. Acton’s research about fossilized accents reveals that explicit instruction of individual pronunciation features plays an important role in the field of language instruction. The method entails progression of four steps. First, learners need to recognize the error that is caused due to their L1 or personality traits, second, conscious control over the parts that are causing problem, and third, learners are facilitated to integrate their learning in real life experiences or workplaces. And lastly they should complete the

program with the confidence that they are able to continue working on them by themselves (Acton, 1984, p 81). The 50% of students did show improvement, which was assessed by the midpoint of the course in which students were informed their progress, independent judges reviewed their pre and post audio recordings to note significant improvement and finally the enthusiastic response of the students in the follow up part of the course who shared that they continue to apply the techniques in their real life. Similar to Acton's four steps method this study will also focus on familiarizing it's subject to one feature of stress. Benrabah's (1997) research also emphasizes the need of including pronunciation aspects especially suprasegmentals in an ESL classroom. It shows how English word-stress is different from other stress-timed languages such as Arabic and how misplacement of stress can hinder comprehension. In most cases, advanced ESL learners are relatively fluent in terms of segmental command but remain inaccurate due to their limited awareness of their suprasegmental errors (Banrabah, 1997). This study will contribute to find out if an adult learner of syllable timed L1 can recognize and become aware of timing of stress in English language through explicit instruction.

Factors Influencing Pronunciation Acquisition

The outcome of teaching suprasegmentals cannot be generalized to an overall pool of learners. The factors, such as, aptitude, age, interest, motivation and intellectual background also play a major role in language acquisition of which only a few will be discussed below (Lightbown and Spada, 2006).

Lightbown & Spada (2006) define aptitude as a natural inborn learning skill that helps learners acquire a language more efficiently than the other learners.

Purrezaey & Khodareza's (2014), study contributes that, students of different intellectual backgrounds and aptitudes perform variously in terms of English multi-syllabic word pronunciation accuracy. The study consisted of 30 senior high school students in Iran. Half of the students were studying natural science and the other half humanities. Both groups were provided with a similar posttest of English multi-syllabic word pronunciation. The findings revealed that there was a significant difference between both groups on their performance. The Natural Science students showed better ability in pronunciation accuracy than Humanity students (Purrezaey & Khodareza, 2014). So, it is important for the ESL teachers to design pronunciation curriculum based on student abilities, aptitudes, language background, exposure to the target language and even interest in the second language.

Trofimovich & Baker (2006) contend about the factor of age that, adult learners of a syllable timed L1, such as Spanish, struggle to acquire the stress-timed nature of English language. The advanced Spanish learners of English tend to produce English with a "syllable duration ratio" by putting somewhat equal stress on content and function words. Trofimovich & Baker (2006) also suggest that learners who arrived in the US in their early twenties learned the L2 at a much faster pace as compared to those who arrived in their early thirties. Along with age there are many other factors that influence the learning process such as memory capacity, intelligence, literacy background, motivation, aptitude, personality and social skills (Trofimovich & Baker, 2006, Lightbown and Spada 2006). The results of the present study will also be determined based on the factors mentioned above.

Explicit Pronunciation Instruction

Explicit pronunciation instruction is generally taken as cognitive input that is available to the learner through conscious representation and can therefore be verbalized, on the other hand, implicit knowledge is intuitive in which learners are not conscious of their cognitive abilities (Silveira 2002). Krashen promotes the idea that “implicit knowledge can be acquired through abundance of exposure” through his monitor model that is based on five hypotheses consisting of:

1. first acquisition learning hypothesis in which we acquire through exposure and we learn through conscious attention to form and structure
2. second monitor hypothesis, in which the learned system monitors in making conscious changes in the acquired system
3. third, natural order hypothesis according to which the “second language acquisition unfolds in predictable sequences” (Lightbown & Spada p. 37)
4. fourth is input hypothesis in which the learner is exposed to comprehensible language and goes one step beyond the already acquired system described as $i+1$
5. last is affective filter hypothesis which constrains learners from acquiring second language because of the influence of affective factors on second language acquisition.

The word affect entails “feelings, motives, needs, attitudes and emotional states” that could “filter out input” making it unavailable for acquisition (Lightbown & Spada, 2006. p 37). Krashen’s monitor model in favor of implicit learning was thought to be insufficient in the later years in which researchers argued that “consciousness and awareness raising are important in second language acquisition, rather than Krashen’s

(1982) position that pronunciation is acquired naturally”(Couper, 2003. p 54). It has been accepted that explicit instruction improves pronunciation accuracy (Silveira 2002, p96).

Couper (2003) in his research investigates the effectiveness of a program of explicit instruction on a group of post intermediate learners from a range of backgrounds who were living in New Zealand and wanted to improve professionally and academically. Couper’s study shows that pronunciation instruction is taught implicitly at most places in the US and there is no attempt to explicitly cover the different phonological features. It is generally taught incidentally as part of the syllabus (Couper, 2003. p 53). In favor of explicit pronunciation instruction Couper’s study supports the value of explicit attention to pronunciation in the ESL classrooms. Couper’s study incorporates a pronunciation sub syllabus within the main syllabus of a post-intermediate level ESOL (Educational Services Overseas Limited) class conducted at a university in Auckland. It involved 18 hours of in class study over a 16-week long time period. In this sub syllabus the learners are made aware of their specific difficulties in pronunciation and are explicitly taught the problematic features of segmental and suprasegmental levels over the course of 16 weeks. The participants showed positive gains (proved from the pre and posttest results) assessed by the researcher and thought that pronunciation should be an integral part of a language curriculum.

Acton,1984; Hahn, 2004; Benrabah, 1997; Rubin & Pickering, 2010; and Trofimovich, & Baker, 2006, have called for the need of cognitive pronunciation instruction of suprasegmentals. It has been acknowledged that adults have a difficulty in acquiring L2 suprasegmentals and that they should be treated explicitly in ESL classrooms.

The Gap

As pronunciation teaching is marginalized in ESL classroom, teachers need to be trained accordingly to be able to create relevant lesson plans that could serve the purpose of formal instruction of suprasegmentals. For that the teachers rely on the available empirical findings, which are unfortunately very few. As discussed previously this study will deal with only one suprasegmental feature that of syllable-timed (here Spanish) and stress-timed (here English) languages. The results of the study will help us to determine if an adult who is over thirty years of age, arrived in the US 18 years ago with very little formal language instruction can recognize this particular feature in her English and if the error can be corrected through direct individual lessons.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the literature on the topics of pronunciation instruction and the ESL classroom importance of suprasegmentals in pronunciation instruction, factors influencing pronunciation acquisition, the characteristics of syllable-timed and stress-timed languages and the need of explicit pronunciation instruction. The topics above were discussed as a foundation for the need to include suprasegmentals in an ESL classroom. The next chapter will cover the methods for the case study along with the data collection tools for this qualitative research project.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

The aim of this study is to find out if an adult learner of English language whose first language is Spanish can recognize and be aware of the stress-timed nature of English language. To keep the process simple this study will only focus on basic declarative sentences. The previous chapters talked about the importance of including suprasegmental features (here stress-timing) in pronunciation instruction. This chapter will provide methods to teach basic sentence stress to an adult Spanish female learner for this particular study covering the components of research design, participant and setting, ethics, procedure, data collection and assessment, analysis, reflection and summary.

Research Design

This study is a case study and will focus on one suprasegmental feature that of stress timing in English. A case study as a research method is defined as “observing the development of linguistic performance, usually the spontaneous speech of one subject when the speech data are collected at periodic intervals over a span of time” (Nunan, 1992. p 76). Nunan goes on to define a case study as qualitative, naturalistic, process oriented and with results that cannot be generalized to a larger pool of learners. A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates one phenomenon within its real-life context.

Participant and Setting

This study includes only one participant, Anna, a 37-year-old woman who moved to the United States from Mexico 18 years ago. She never attended an English language school in her home country. She is at a high-beginning proficiency level and learned language through exposure and experience. She can read low intermediate level English and needs assistance in writing. Her English language oral skills are at a level that she can get her message across. She wants to learn English for basic needs, to help her children at school and to use comprehensible language at work places.

Anna, my participant, does not want to attend a formal language school and prefers to learn language privately in a casual setting. I taught Anna at home, once a week in which I took four one-hour sessions working on English language stress pattern in declarative sentences.

Ethics

In the process of conducting this study I have taken following steps to protect the participant's rights: the research objectives and goals are clearly explained to the participant, informed consent was obtained, the human subjects form was completed and the anonymity of the participant is maintained. The data was safely stored in my personal computer and my participant was clearly explained the guidelines which also included the right to withdraw at anytime during the course.

Procedure

I begin with familiarizing Anna with the generalized nature of English as a stress-timed language. That is, stressed content words and unstressed or reduced function words. Spanish, on the other hand, is a syllable-timed language. Each lesson refreshes the

topic in hand and aims to provide drills and activities for stressing the content words and reducing the function words in basic declarative sentences. Declarative sentences are used to keep the process simple considering the limited time frame of the study. The learner is assessed through notes, observations and audio recordings in the first and the last session.

The framework of time series design research is followed as suggested by Mackey & Gass 2011, in which I perform a pre and posttest assessment paradigm. The study consists of four consecutive sessions, in which the first and last session is of an hour and twenty minutes length and the two lessons in between are of 60 minutes. The extra 20 minutes in the first and last session are spent in collecting data through taking notes and audio recordings while the participant reads the sample sentences, and the sessions in between are interventional. Following the four stages as suggested by Celce-Murcia, et al. (2010) to teach simple sentence stress I spend one session on one stage, the stages are:

1. Description and analysis
2. Listening discrimination
3. Controlled practice
4. Guided practice

Course Description

There are two overarching goals for this short course. One, the student will demonstrate understanding of content and function words, and two, the student will demonstrate ability to use more stress on content words and reduced stress on function words in full declarative sentences.

Following Celce-Murcia & Goodwin's (2010) four steps of teaching stress each session will be planned as presented below:

Week 1: 80 minutes: Assessment, description and analysis, practice stress pattern through rhythm drills.

Week 2: 60 minutes: Review, Listening discrimination

Week 3: 60 minutes: Review, Controlled practice

Week 4: 80 minutes: Review, Guided practice, Post assessment

Session Descriptions

Session 1

Objective Student will become aware of the rhythmic patterns of syllable-timed and stress-timed difference between Spanish and English.

Assessment

Student will be asked to read the 10 sample sentences shown in Appendix A. The teacher will take notes and record while the participant reads the sample sentences

Anna's speech sample will be recorded through notes for analysis and post assessment.

The extra 20 minutes of the first and the last session will be spent in collecting data.

Description and Analysis

The stress pattern will be visually shared through sentences in written form with the highlighted content words, the words that carry the most meaning, that are stressed while the other helping words are given less stress.

Student will be provided clear guidelines concerning which words (function or content words) in a sentence tend to receive more stress and which ones receive less or no stress.

Content and function words will be taught through the following table in Appendix section A.

Content and function words will be discussed with examples in collaboration with the student. The student will then demonstrate understanding of stressing the content words and reducing the function words through the use of a rhythm drill as suggested by Celce-Murcia & Goodwin (2010) shown in appendix A.

To get started, I will read the sentences trying to get the subject to identify the stressed elements. Without much help, my participant should notice that stress usually falls on the content words- words that carry the most information. During the second listening, the student can show a sign like tap the desk or clap, to experience how to stress the content words no matter how many unstressed syllables fall in between. Once a clear rhythmic pattern is established we can practice the sentences together. This way my student will be provided a controlled practice activity that reinforces the nature of English as a stress-timed language (Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin, 2010).

Practice basic sentence stress

Sentence stress will be practiced through the two declarative sentences presented in appendix A. The two sentences will be practiced to see how much time it takes to speak each. The student will clap on each content word and will notice that even if one sentence is longer than the other it takes almost the same time saying it because of the equal number of content words.

Session 2

Objective

Student will start to recognize content and function words in declarative sentences.

Student will be able to identify content words in declarative sentences through controlled practice of listening activities.

Review concept (content/ function words)

T will write two declarative sentences on the board and ask student to point to content and function words. The sentences are in Appendix B Task 1.

T will then help the student create more sentences focusing on stressing content words and reducing function words.

Rhythm drill to practice stress pattern

The teacher will read a nursery rhyme stressing the content words and reducing the function words. The rhythm drill is in appendix B task 2.

T will read the sentences from the rhythm drill and ask the students to notice the stressed and unstressed words.

T will ask the student to repeat stressing the important words and reducing the connecting less important words.

Listening discrimination

Pre-listening

Student look at drawings which depict a nursery rhyme, “it’s raining, it’s pouring...” and review meaning of vocabulary used, such as: pouring, snoring, bumped.

Listening

Teacher will demonstrate the sentence stress pattern on content and function words on four sentences shown in appendix B task 3.

Teacher will model the stress pattern by reading the children's rhyme. The rhyme is in appendix B task 4.

As teacher reads it three times, student only listens. T claps to show rhythm. T then reads it one line at a time and students are asked to mark where they hear the stress. Teacher and learner stop after each line to agree on correct stress:

It's *rain*ing, it's *pour*ing
 The *old man* is *snor*ing
Went to *bed*
*Bump*ed his *head*
 And he *didn't* get *up* in the *morning*

Controlled practice and feedback

Student is given a number of sentences in which the stressed syllables are already marked. The student is asked to stress the marked syllables and reduce the unmarked ones. This practice will help the student discriminate the stressed content words from the reduced function words. The sentences are in appendix B task 5.

Session 3

Review concept (content/function words)

Teacher will review the concept of content and function words by asking questions from the student.

T will ask the student what content and function words are.

This will help assess learning and reinforcing the previously taught concept.

T will then write five sentences on the board: See appendix C task 1.

T will draw two columns on a side of the board, one for content words and the other for function words.

T will ask the student to read one sentence at a time and write the content and function words from the sentence in the column it belongs.

Review stress and reduction

T will ask the student to read the above sentences stressing the content and function words already marked. See appendix C Task 1 C.

Controlled practice and feedback

The student receives four cards with a sentence on each card. Each sentence fits into one of the bubble patterns below which are placed on a table. The student will clap for the big bubbles to show/see rhythm pattern.

000000 0000 000000 0000

The student is told that one sentence belongs under each pattern. T will help if needed.

When all sentences are attached to one pattern then the student will read each sentence to demonstrate understanding of the rhythm pattern. The teacher and the student will then discuss if they are appropriately placed. The sentences for guided practice and corresponding patterns are in appendix C Task 2.

We'll discuss more examples if time allows.

Follow up

T will ask the student to share what she learned.

T will ask the student to bring five sentences to the next class and show content and function words to review the concept learned.

Session 4

Review concept (content/function words)

T asks student to give some example sentences highlighting the content words. T and the student discuss the answers.

Guided practice

Task 1: Student will be asked to sing a song written on a paper while stressing content words and reducing function words. It is easier to follow the stress pattern following a tune in which function words are automatically reduced and content words are stressed.

I'm a little teapot

Short and stout

Here's my handle

Here's my spout

Task 2: Give student some sentences and have them circle the content words in a sentence. Ask her to emphasize the content words by clapping, snapping or tapping the desk. See appendix D task 2 for examples.

Communicative practice and feedback

Task 3:

Story telling:

Material: Photocopied picture story from one of the Picture Stories books.

Teacher models activity by creating a story looking at a sample picture story. The student is asked to notice stress and rhythm pattern in the sentences.

Student is given a picture story and is asked to write a couple of sentences creating a story from the picture. She will then share her story being careful about stressing the content words and distressing the function words.

The teacher will help in vocabulary, sentence structure.

Student will share the story twice in her own words by being careful about stress and rhythm (McCurdy, 2014).

Interview and Reflection

The student will be interviewed to reflect on the study. She will be asked to be careful about her stress pattern while sharing information about these sessions and her learning experience. Following questions will be asked.

- What did you think of the study, your opinion?
- Did you learn anything from it?
- Which was the best part of the study and why did you like it?
- Would you apply what you learned in your language in real life?
- Are there any parts that you would like to be done differently for future students?

The participant will respond to these questions, that will serve as a warm up exercise for her. I will then have her read the 10 sample sentences from the first assessment as a post assessment tool to compare differences and assess learning.

Data Collection

Data will be collected in two ways:

1. Anna will be recorded reading the 10 sample sentences (Appendix A) This will take place during the pre- and post-assessment.
2. The researcher will observe and take notes. This will take place during the pre- and post- assessment, as well as during the interventional sessions.

Data Analysis

This will be her last session in which the student will be assessed through audio recordings on a personal device, and audacity software to measure her stress pattern. The audio recordings will be deleted after the process, notes and observations. I will record her voice on the first and the last session in which she will be interviewed to talk about her personal life and her learning experience followed by reading the sample sentences. The notes of the assessment part of first and last assessment will be compared to assess learning.

The reason of including the sample sentences as part of the assessment process is to keep the procedure concrete through which the participant will be reading the same sentences in the first and the last session. The stress pattern will be more comparable to draw solid conclusions.

Summary

In this chapter I provided methods for the study that will be conducted with one subject over the course of four weeks to find out if simple sentence stress can be recognized and practiced by an adult learner of English language whose first language is Spanish. The next chapter will provide results of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND OBSERVATIONS

The findings of my research in this chapter help to answer the question: *Can a speaker of a syllable-timed L1 recognize and be aware of stress-timed simple sentence stress pattern to (declarative sentences) in English?*

Following the method presented in the chapter 3 I assessed Anna, the participant of the study, at the first session. Anna was interviewed as a warm up activity to get started. Anna spoke for a couple of minutes about her family. Then, she was asked to read ten sample sentences in her best pronunciation. The sample sentences consisted of simple easy to read declarative sentences. I gave her some time to go over and read the sentences on her own before the assessment. Then, I asked her to read the sentences while I audio recorded her and took notes. My observation, notes and recordings, clearly reflected her syllable-timed first language influence on her second language reading. She read each syllable and word with stress without reducing any parts.

In the pre assessment reading test Anna stressed 100% of both the content words and the function words. But, in the post assessment, as measured and compared through Audacity software, Anna was aware but not master of the stressed content words and unstressed function words, which is reflected in the post assessment section presented in table 4. The first sentence had two content words and four function words. Anna tried to stress the content words. She carefully attempted to quickly say the function words and clearly say

the content words. Second sentence had four content words and four function words.

Anna was careful in saying the function words quickly and stressing the content words clearly. She was conscious of stressing the content words in each sentence but as she progressed and got relaxed she started stressing all the words. Anna's stress pattern is displayed in the following table.

Table 4

Pre and post analysis

Pre assessment stress pattern	Post assessment stress pattern
The book is on the table	The book is on the table
0 0 00 0 0 0	o 0 o o o 00
Christmas is the best time of the year	Christmas is the best time of the year.
0 0 00 0 0 0 0 0	00 o o 0 0 o o 0
Our school is closed due to bad weather	Our school is closed due to bad weather.
0 0 00 0 0 0 00	0 0 o 0 0 0 0 00
Fruits and vegetables are good for health	Fruits and vegetables are good for health
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	0 o 0 o 0 0 0 0
My daughter is five years old and she is	My daughter is five years old and she is
0 0 0 00 0 0 0 0 0	0 00 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
in kindergarten	in kindergarten
0 00	0 00

I need to return this sweater because it	I need to return this sweater because it
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
did not fit me right	did not fit me right
0 0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0 0
I like to cook Mexican food for my kids	I like to cook Mexican food for my kids
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
because they love it.	because they love it
0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0
Maria works for a telephone company	Maria works for a telephone company
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
and she is happy with her work.	and she is happy with her work
0 0 0 0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0 0 0 0

In the pretest she stressed 100% of the content words and the function words and in the posttest she stressed 100% of the content words and 80% of the function words as measured by audacity, software to measure voice. This shows that Anna can recognize and reproduce stress on content words, however, more work and practice needs to be done regarding the reduction of function words. Analyzing the first sentence we will compare the results of pre and posttest closely to assess learning and productivity of the session. The first sentence has six words of which two are content and four are function words. Anna stressed all the words in the pretest while she was conscious of the correct

stress pattern in the posttest trying not to stress the function words and stress the content words.

Researcher's Field Observation

Anna's previous knowledge of main parts of speech such as nouns, verbs and adjectives contributed in her understanding of content and function words. It was interesting to see that Anna was able to identify the content words in the sentences provided for the activities. The concept of saying the content or important words clearly and saying the function words quickly made sense to Anna but I could see that even though she was aware of the particular feature she struggled to reduce the function words in her speech. Part of the reason could be that I did not address the concept of reduction but only saying the content words clearly and function words quickly. Another element that could influence her learning was the reading piece. When reading became difficult so did paying attention to pronunciation. The contrast between when Anna was able to pay attention and when she wasn't is telling.

Participant's Comments of Learning

Anna shared that "my daughter says that my English is getting good. I can understand others better too". She also shared that "I can understand other people better too because I try to only listen to the content words". Anna also got complimented at work that "your English is getting better. You understand better too". Anna felt very rewarded as these sessions impacted not only her intelligibility but her confidence. Anna showed interest in pursuing with the sessions focusing on other pronunciation skills.

Interventional Lessons

In the following section I will discuss the interventional lessons and my observations.

Content and Function Words

After the first assessment I introduced Anna to the concept of syllable-timed and stress-timed stress pattern through content and function words. We talked about content words that they are the information words such as nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs and function words, which are the connecting words such as articles, auxiliaries, pronouns and prepositions. Anna showed sufficient understanding of the concept of stressing the content words and reducing the function words. She knew her grammar terms for the content words such as nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. Through sample sentences Anna indicated to the teacher that the content words were the ones to be stressed.

Rhythm drill

As a controlled practice I demonstrated Anna the stress-timed sentence pattern of English through a rhythm drill. It was a listening activity in which I, as a teacher, read a nursery rhyme three times by stressing the content words. I clapped on each content word in a sentence and asked Anna to notice how much time it takes to read sentences that contain equal content words and unequal function words. Anna found the drill really interesting and showed sufficient understanding of content and function words. She also could see that content words in a sentence are pronounced clearly and on the contrary function words are uttered quickly.

Another controlled practice activity consisted of some sample sentences in which the content words were already marked. Anna was asked to read the sentences by stressing the content words and saying the function words quickly. I noticed for this activity that

Anna started overlooking the function words by not saying them at all. After the feedback Anna was asked to read the sentences again by stressing the marked content words and saying the function words quickly. She knew what she was expected to do but kept stressing the function words along with the marked content words because of her Spanish background. The results of the study show that Anna probably needed more training on how to reduce function words instead of stressing content words.

Bubble exercise

For the guided activity Anna was given four flash cards with one bubble pattern on each. I wrote four sentences on a paper and asked her to match the sentences with the appropriate bubble pattern. Anna successfully matched all the sentences with the right patterns.

Another guided activity asked her to sing a given song by stressing the content words and reducing the function words. The participant successfully marked the content words but struggled in reducing the function words.

Communicative practice

Anna was given a picture story from a popular Adult ESL Textbook called Snack Attack. She was asked to look at the four pictures and create one sentence for each one. Anna was able to create simple sentences on the paper by underlining the content words. But when she was asked to read the sentences she struggled again in reducing the function words.

Post Assessment

When I compared the notes from the pre and post assessment I could clearly see that the participant of the study showed understanding of the stress-timed sentence pattern of

English language. She knew what content and function words are. She was very careful reading the sample sentences. Her stress pattern on the first four sentences was much better as she was very careful of applying what she had learned but as she got relaxed her syllable-timed background came out.

Participant's Reflection

Anna thought that she has learned a new thing in these sessions and she is happy to notice that she tries to stress the content words in her English. Also, she is noticing a difference in her comprehension when she tries to only focus on important words while communicating with others. Her teenager daughter thinks that, “my mom’s language skills are getting much better. She can understand other people better and also can make herself understood better too”. She showed interest in learning more of pronunciation features to improve her language skills. As a listener Anna said that “I try to focus on the important words now and I think that I understand better”.

The results and observations of this study helped to determine that the particular feature of stress-timing can be taught explicitly and does show positive results. Adult learners can recognize the particular feature in hand but need time and conscious effort to acquire it. Second language pronunciation cannot be acquired instantly but if a learner becomes aware of certain features and can recognize them only then he/she can be mindful of applying that feature to their language.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The results of the study presented in Chapter four were reported and analyzed in order to answer the research question: *Can a speaker of a syllable-timed L1 recognize and be aware of stress-timed simple sentence stress pattern to (declarative sentences) in English?* Chapter five will cover my reflection and the limitations of the study. The implications of the study for future ESL teachers and students in the light of the results of this study will be suggested.

Reflections

I thoroughly enjoyed my data collection process as it was very focused and at the same time fun experience. Anna, my participant was very excited about learning something new. She came to each session well prepared and ready to learn more. Her previous knowledge of English grammar helped her to comprehend the concept of content and function words. She knew her nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs and grasped the concept of stressing the content words very easily. I was amazed to see how she was able to highlight the content words for each activity.

One thing that I realized after the process of teaching the concept of reduced function words through the idea of saying them quickly it may be more effective if the learner was introduced to the same idea through the concept of reduction. For my future students I am

going to also spend some time on the concept of reduction like the flow in words rock n roll, bed n bath, Tom n Jerry and so on. This will be fruitful depending on the first language of the student. For example Chinese speakers need to work on both stressing syllables (especially elongating them) and reducing syllables. Spanish learners, as found in this study, can stress syllables but have a hard time reducing them.

What I realized through my research was that that acquiring pronunciation is a gradual process. Even though Anna was able to see the content words that are stressed in a simple sentence she struggled in producing it due to her Spanish L1 background. Now that Anna is aware of English stress pattern and can recognize stressed content words while listening her language skills will most likely improve with more practice. On the third session Anna told me that she got a compliment at her work place that her English is getting better. Also, she said that she tries to focus on content words while listening or communicating in English. She does remember what she learned in this class. I believe that Anna would improve if she continues to take pronunciation lessons and keep practicing the features learned in her real life language use.

Limitations

Pronunciation is acquired gradually with more exposure and practice. Formal instruction of pronunciation features, one at a time, raises awareness of particular features, makes the learner recognize them, and eventually apply them to their language in real life. The results of the study are promising but at the same time I feel that as Anna is able to stress the content words in the sample sentences, will she be able to recognize it in real life? And, that is one of the limitation of this study. In only four weeks it is not possible to expect 100% result from the learner. It has to be a longitudinal study that

involves repeated observations of the same variable over long periods of time. I do plan to keep revisiting the already learned features to check learning.

This was a very short four weeks long research project, there might be different outcomes of other longitudinal research projects. Further questions that I would like to explore are

- Do learners of varying abilities and literacy background be taught differently?
Like would the methods used in this study be equally fruitful for academically advanced students with a high literacy background?
- Would there be a difference in results if there was not one participant but a large number of students?
- Would other suprasegmental features such as intonation patterns be also covered in teaching stress?
- Reading may influence production of the learned feature. Would the results be different if the participant was assessed through spontaneous real life speech activity? In this study the participant was assessed through only 10 pre and post-test sample sentences.
- How would more explicit instruction on reduction strategies affect the participant's production of stress-timed patterns in English?

Implications

This study can be a good resource for second language teachers to consult in designing a pronunciation course focusing on one suprasegmental feature of simple sentence stress.

Language teachers should consider the expectation of ELL students who seek improved

intelligibility. Explicit attention to individual segmental and suprasegmental features can reveal positive results.

Summary

In this study we were able to find out if pronunciation can be taught explicitly. An adult learner of syllable-timed first language can recognize the stress-timed nature of English. The examination of this study revealed positive pedagogical gains and is a good resource for language teachers to follow in designing a pronunciation lesson plan. In sum, it has to be acknowledged that pronunciation cannot be acquired instantly but if a learner is made aware of a certain feature he/she will be able to put deliberate attention on the particular feature to their language. Target can be achieved with conscious application of individual pronunciation features.

APPENDIX A

LESSON PLANS

DAY 1:

A: Session 1 Lesson plan

Objectives: SWBAT recognize the stress-timed nature of English.

Class time: 80 minutes

Student: 1 adult Spanish-speaking learner of English

Material and tools: Paper, pencil, computer and Audacity software to collect data.

Task 1:

Warm up:

a. Student will be asked to read the following questions.

Why do you want to learn English?

Tell me about your family?

Student will be asked to think of answers to the questions in three minutes and be ready to share her thoughts orally.

Student will be asked to read the following sentences in the first and the last session.

Sentence Stress

Read the sentences.

1. The book is on the table.
2. Christmas is the best time of the year.

3. Our school is closed due to bad weather.
4. Fruits and vegetables are good for health.
5. My daughter is five years old and she is in Kindergarten.
6. I need to return this sweater because it did not fit me right.
7. I like to cook Mexican food for my kids because they love it.
8. Maria works for a telephone company and she is happy with her work.
9. I am going to visit my sister next week. She is very unwell.
10. It's snowing outside and I have a long drive home.

Rationale: (just for the teacher)

Pretest:

Same sentences will be used for pre and posttest.

Student will be asked to read the sentences, one at a time, in the best accent and pronunciation.

Teacher will take notes on the stress pattern. The stressed parts of speech will be highlighted and will be used for the interventional sessions.

Posttest:

Student should be aware of the stress pattern by now and should show enough understanding of the sentence stress pattern in which content words are stressed and function words are reduced or not stressed.

She will be asked to read the sentences while the teacher will take notes and compare the results from the first session.

Task 2:

Talk about content and function words.

Content words/information words:

Nouns= person, place or thing

Verb=action

Adjective=describes an object, person, place or thing

Adverb=tells us how, where or when something happens

Negatives= no, not and never

Demonstrative pronouns= this, that, these and those

Question words=what, where, when how and why

Function words:

Articles= used to indicate specific or nonspecific nouns. A, an, the

Auxiliary verbs= to establish the tense. Do, be, have- help with conjugation of tense

Pronouns= I, you, him, us, ours, she

Preposition= show relationships in time and space. In, at, through, over, between, under, on.

Task 3:

Try saying or listening to the sentence below.

1	2	3	4
1 and	2 and	3 and	4
1and a	2and a	3and a	4
1and then a	2 and then a	3 and then a	4

The student will listen to the teacher saying the sentences and will be asked to notice that the four sentences take the same length of time to say. The content words 123 and 4 are stressed and function words and, and a, and then a are reduced.

Task 4:

Rhythm Drill:

Demonstration of Content words and functions words through clapping rhythm drill

CATS	CHASE	MICE
The CATS have	CHASED	MICE
The CATS will	CHASE	the MICE
The CATS have been	CHASing	the MICE

Cats chase mice rhythm drill (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 2010, p210).

Task 5:

Practice sentence rhythm.

Maria eats lunch.

Maria should have eaten her lunch.

T asks students: Which sentence is longer? Which sentence will take longer to say?

T reads sentences while clapping in rhythm. Repeat a few times. Ask student: Which one took longer?

T asks student: Which words are most important? When elicited, underline the content words on the board.

T discusses with student that English has a rhythm, and “important” words get stress, and the other words are generally not stressed (McCurdy, 2014).

Follow up: Again looking at the sentences on the board, T directs attention to content vs function words. Work with students to think of examples of both content and function words (McCurdy, 2014).

DAY 2:

B: Session 2 Lesson plan

Objectives: SWBAT recognize stressed content words and reduced function words through listening discrimination exercises and controlled practice.

Class time: 60 minutes

Student: 1 adult Spanish Learner of English.

Material: blackboard, Paper, handout with pictures and pencil

Task 1: Review Content and Function words:

T will write the following sentences on blackboard and tell the student to find content words.

T will then ask the student to read the sentences stressing the content words and reducing the function words.

- . The school starts at seven in the morning.
- . It's a beautiful day today.
- . The book is on the table.
- . My favorite holiday is Christmas. it's the best time of the year.

Task 2: Rhythm drill

Rhythm drill will be used to practice stress and reduction.

The rhythm drill

MICE	EAT	CHEESE
The MICE	EAT	CHEESE
The MICE	EAT	the CHEESE
The MICE will	EAT	the CHEESE
The MICE will have	EATen	the CHEESE
The MICE might have been EATing the CHEESE.		

(Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 2010,p 215)

T will read the sentences from the rhythm drill and ask the students to notice the stressed and unstressed words.

T will ask the student to repeat stressing the important words and reducing the connecting less important words.

Task 3: Listening discrimination

a. Pre-listening:

Teacher will show pictures of the nursery rhyme and discuss content words in collaboration with the student.

The words are raining, pouring, snoring, bumped, morning.

b. Listening:

Teacher will read the nursery rhyme stressing the content words and reducing the function words.

Children's rhyme is written on the board—

It's raining, it's pouring
 The old man is snoring
 Went to bed
 Bumped his head
 And he didn't get up in the morning

As teacher reads it three times, student only listens. T claps to show rhythm. T then reads it one line at a time and students are asked to mark where they hear the stress. Class stops after each line to agree on correct stress:

It's *rain*ing, it's *pour*ing
 The *old* *man* is *snor*ing
Went to *bed*
Bumped his *head*
 And he *didn't* get *up* in the *morning*

Task 4: Controlled practice and feedback

Student is given the following sentences with the stressed syllables already marked.

Student is asked to read the sentences, using stress as marked.

The <i>sheets</i> are in the <i>closet</i> .	Your <i>family</i> is <i>big</i> .
<i>Ann</i> <i>sat</i> in the <i>hall</i> .	<i>Don't</i> <i>drink</i> <i>that</i> !
It's <i>time</i> for <i>lunch</i> .	She <i>doesn't</i> <i>swim</i> in the <i>river</i> .
They're <i>playing</i> <i>ball</i> in the <i>street</i> .	<i>Sue</i> <i>hurt</i> her <i>back</i> .
The <i>doctor</i> is <i>coming</i> <i>today</i> .	<i>Where</i> are your <i>glasses</i> ?
<i>Where's</i> your <i>sister</i> ?	She <i>bought</i> <i>rice</i> for <i>lunch</i> .
<i>Look</i> in the <i>desk</i> .	<i>Why</i> do you <i>like</i> <i>snow</i> ?
Her <i>new</i> <i>dress</i> was on <i>sale</i> .	

(McCurdy,2014)

Teacher will provide feedback at the end of the activity.

DAY 3:

C: Session 3 Lesson plan:

Objectives: SWBAT demonstrate understanding of stressing the content words and reducing the function words in simple sentences.

Time: 60 minutes

Student: 1 adult Spanish learner of English.

Material: blackboard, paper and pencil

Task 1:

Review content and function words.

a. Teacher will ask to explain what content words are and which parts of a sentence should be stressed? This will help assess learning and reinforcing the pre-learned concept.

b. Teacher will provide following five sentences in a handout.

Mary is going to the airport with her brother.

Tom is driving his new car.

Sara is going to Turkey for winter break.

Linda is watching a movie with her friend.

T will draw two columns on a side of the board, one for content words and the other for function words.

T will ask the student to read one sentence at a time and write the content and function words from the sentence in the column it belongs.

c. Review stress and reduction:

T will ask the student to read the above sentences stressing the content and reducing the function words already marked.

Mary is going to the airport with her brother.

Tom is driving his new car.

Sara is going to Turkey for winter break.

Linda is watching a movie with her friend.

Task 2: Guided practice

Bubble exercise:

Student will practice stress on content words with the help of bubbles used for syllables. The bigger bubbles are used for content words and smaller bubbles for function words. Teacher will provide four flash cards with one bubble pattern on each card. Then the teacher will write one sentence and ask the student to match the sentence with the appropriate pattern.

00 0000

000000

I work for a doctor.

0 0 0 0

Why are you eating cake?

o 0 o 0

Juan will tell her

The man is tall.

(McCurdy, 2014).

Task 3: Follow up

Teacher will ask the student to share what she learned and if she feels that she can use stress correctly in her English language.

DAY 4:

Session 4: Lesson plan

Objectives: SWBAT recognize stressed-timed nature of English language. And will attempt to produce it in her language.

Time: 80 minutes

Student: 1 adult Spanish learner of English

Material: Computer, paper, photo copied picture story.

Review Content and Function Words:

T will ask the student to share sentences showing understanding of content and function words and where to put stress.

Guided practice:

Task 1: Task 1: T will ask the student to sing a song written on a paper while stressing the content words and reducing the function words.

I'm a little teapot

Short and stout

Here's my handle

Here's my spout

Task 2: Give student some sentences and have them circle the content words in a sentence. Ask her to emphasize the content words by clapping, snapping or tapping the desk.

Sentences:

He wants to be a doctor, and he wants to serve mankind.
 The postman left the box at my doorsteps.
 She loves volleyball and she is in the Varsity team.
 She likes to travel and she is going to London for winter break.

Communicative practice and feedback:

Task 3:

Story telling:

Material: Photocopied picture story from Longman's Picture Stories books. Longman's Snack Attack story.

The teacher models activity by creating a story looking at pictures in a book. The student is asked to notice stress and rhythm pattern in the sentences.

Student is given a picture story and is asked to write a couple of sentences creating a story from the picture. She will then share her story being careful about stressing the content words and distressing the function words.

The teacher will help in vocabulary, sentence structure.

Student will share the story twice in her own words by being careful about stress and rhythm (McCurdy, 2014).

Task 4: Data collection and analysis

The last twenty minutes of the fourth session will be spent recording the student when she will be asked to respond to questions in terms of her learning. She will be asked to

read the same sentences used in the first assessment. I will ask her to highlight the content words and try to read them on her own to practice first. Then I will ask her to read the sentences in the best accent she can. I will take notes on her stress pattern while hearing her read the sample sentences.

The data collected will help to determine if the course was successful or not.

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